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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000082

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: GOT AND KRG MOVING TOWARD DIALOGUE?

REF: A. 06 ANKARA 6729
[1](#)B. 06 ANKARA 6671

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Kurdish Regional Government and the GOT are moving in the direction of initiating a dialogue, perhaps in early February, according to Masoud Barzani's foreign policy advisor (and former KDP Ankara rep.) Safeen Dizayee. According to Dizayee, GOT officials this week offered to receive KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani for a low-key, one-on-one meeting, perhaps at a hotel in Istanbul with a yet to be named GOT interlocutor. While not the official meeting the Iraqi Kurds were seeking, Dizayee indicated he will recommend that Nechirvan Barzani accept the invitation so as to break the ice and establish a dialogue between KRG and GOT reps. Dizayee also expressed: Kurdish support for the new USG strategy in Iraq; the wish that the GOT would work harder to convince Makhmour refugee camp residents to return to Turkey; and the hope the U.S. will coordinate with the KRG better on issues related to the official Iranian presence there. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) Visiting Barzani foreign policy advisor Safeen Dizayee and current KDP Ankara rep. Omar Merani hosted a lunch January 16 for Emboffs, using the occasion to discuss the current state of GOT-KRG relations, how best to move forward with the permanent closure of Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq, the USG's new strategy in Iraq, and the recent arrest of Iranian liaison officials in Erbil.

NOT HAPPY WITH GOT STANCE, BUT WILLING TO AIR CONCERNS

[1](#)3. (C) Dizayee emphasized the need for direct dialogue between GOT and KRG officials, criticizing the GOT for recent statements and events that called into question the GOT's willingness to engage Iraqi Kurdish officials on a range of issues. KDP and PUK reps. have previously offered to send a joint delegation to Turkey in order to discuss a host of issues on which the two sides differ (e.g., countering the PKK presence in northern Iraq; final status of Kirkuk; draft KRG constitution). Senior GOT officials, however, had heretofore demurred, citing their fear that such a visit would raise public expectations in Turkey that progress might

be made on these issues -- progress the Turks assessed could not be met (ref a). Dizayee pointed to the GOT's decision to allow the December 13-14 conference organized in Istanbul by the Global Anti-Aggression Campaign to go ahead, a conference that included representatives of several "radical Sunni groups" (ref b), as well as a January 15 conference organized in Ankara by the Global Strategy Institute to discuss the future status of Kirkuk to which Iraqi Shia, Sunnis, and Turkmen were invited but from which Kurds were excluded, as evidence of Turkish interference in internal Iraqi affairs.

¶4. (C) According to Dizayee, Kurdish officials were particularly unhappy about the January 15 conference because MPs and GOT officials attended, lending it credence as a "quasi-official event." In response, Dizayee said the KRG believes Turkey has no right to introduce or impose ideas from the outside regarding the future of Iraq, especially regarding the future status of Kirkuk, noting that "elements of a solution on the issue are already in place" (i.e., Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution). Despite their displeasure, Dizayee expressed his fear that the lack of a serious dialogue between the GOT and Iraqi Kurdish officials, and the GOT penchant for communicating through the press, had exacerbated already poor relations between the two sides. Dizayee pointed out that relations between the GOT and Iraqi Kurds had been far better when Saddam Hussein was still in power.

¶5. (C) As a result, Dizayee had arranged to meet with Ahmet Davutoglu, PM Erdogan's and FM Gul's foreign policy advisor, to press the GOT to sit down with a KRG delegation so they could air their mutual differences. Davutoglu, according to

ANKARA 00000082 002 OF 003

Dizayee, accepted the fact that senior dialogue between the GOT and KRG officials would be useful and arranged for Dizayee to meet January 16 with GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Celikkol. Celikkol proposed the dialogue begin with a small, preferably one-on-one meeting between KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and a GOT official, perhaps at an Istanbul hotel, in early February. Hosting a one-on-one at an Istanbul venue would help the GOT control public expectations from such a meeting.

¶6. (C) Dizayee indicated such a meeting would not be the KRG's preferred option. However, he told us he will recommend to the Barzanis that the KRG accept the offer so as to break the ice and begin a dialogue that can, hopefully, gain momentum. Davutoglu, according to Dizayee, emphasized that having gotten past its potential "train-wreck" on EU accession in December, Turkey would be focusing on Iraq this year as it enters a long campaign period before presidential and parliamentary elections. With electoral politics in mind, the GOT is feeling pressure from the nationalist opposition to be seen to be doing something to counter the ongoing threat from the PKK.

¶7. (C) With respect to how the KRG might be able to be more helpful in responding to GOT concerns on the PKK presence in northern Iraq, Dizayee said it would be extremely difficult for Peshmerga forces to be involved in any military action against the PKK. He offered that the KRG, "in our humble way," might be able to provide intelligence on the PKK to the Turks if asked, depending on what was requested. However, he also mentioned the possibility the KRG could move additional Peshmerga to the Turkey-Iraq border to help stem PKK incursions into Turkey, something we noted would be very helpful.

¶8. (C) Dizayee opined that only one-half of the PKK's fighters in northern Iraq are Turkish citizens, with the others a mix of Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian Kurds. In that context, he broached the idea that Iraq could, perhaps, offer an amnesty to the Iraqi citizens within the PKK in hopes of prompting others to leave the organization as well.

KURDISH RESPONSE TO A TURKISH CROSS-BORDER INCURSION

¶9. (C) Dizayee said the level of nationalism is flaring in the Kurdish region in Iraq in reaction to public statements by GOT officials regarding the future of Kurds in Iraq as well as the conferences noted above. Were the GOT to initiate a cross-border incursion against PKK targets in northern Iraq, Dizayee said Kurds would respond strongly, probably protesting through mass demonstrations at Turkish embassies throughout Europe, similar to the wave of demonstrations in 1999 that followed the arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

KURDISH VIEWS ON NEW USG IRAQ STRATEGY

¶10. (C) On the new USG Iraq strategy, Dizayee said in light of the many recommendations in the Iraq Study Group report and in other reports, they had expected President Bush to provide more detail on the USG's new strategy. Kurdish officials now believe the President has taken the correct approach, noting that Iraqi security forces cannot be relied upon right now to provide a sufficient level of security in the country. Concerning the push to establish a new moderate bloc of Iraqi politicians that could lead the country out of the sectarian morass in which it finds itself, Dizayee stressed the need to be inclusive of all who wish to be involved in the political process, and to come down hard on those terrorists who do not. In that vein, he was critical of PM Maliki's decision to send an envoy to speak with Moqtada al-Sadr, noting that al-Sadr was clearly in the latter camp. Referring to reports regarding the possibility of using Peshmerga to provide security outside of Kurdish areas, especially in Baghdad, he said KRG officials had offered their assistance to the central government

ANKARA 00000082 003 OF 003

"politically and, if necessary, militarily." However, the potential for backlash among Sunni and Shiite Arab Iraqis to the use of such troops outside of Kurdish areas would make such a move counterproductive. Instead, he noted, KRG officials had offered GOI authorities the option of taking predominantly Kurdish Iraqi Army troops out of Ninewah and Kirkuk provinces to provide added security elsewhere in Iraq.

CLOSING DOWN MAKHMOUR...TURKS MUST BE MORE CONVINCING

¶11. (C) Concerning the closure of Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq, Dizayee said the major issue is what to do with those who do not want to return to Turkey. He stressed the need for the GOT to be more forward-leaning in its efforts to convince the refugees, many of whom fled Turkey in the mid-1990s at the height of Turkey's military campaign against the PKK inside Turkey, that times had changed. His hope is that such a campaign, combined with some compensation and in conjunction with monitoring by UNHCR, could be effective in luring the majority of the camp's residents home. For those who feared prosecution by the GOT for possible crimes committed, assurances of GOT intent not to pursue cases would also be key. We noted that many in the camp, having lived for years in Iraq, might very well want to stay there. Dizayee said it would not be easy for the KRG to resettle them, pointing to the large number of internally displaced Iraqis already residing in the Kurdish region whom the KRG is supporting.

USG's CRACKDOWN ON IRANIANS -- PLEASE COORDINATE WITH US

¶12. (C) Dizayee expressed the KRG's embarrassment at hearing of the detention of Iranian officials posted to Iran's liaison office in Erbil as KRG President Barzani was meeting with an Iranian delegation. While stressing that he understands the destabilizing role Iran is playing in Iraq,

Dizayee said Iraqis still need to work with the Iranians. The KRG's main concern was the lack of coordination with it by U.S. forces and he expressed the hope that "in the future such situations can be handled more delicately."

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Despite Amb. Celikkol's insistence in December that Turkey must see steps by the Kurds on the Kirkuk and PKK issues before the GOT would be willing to sit down and talk with KRG officials (ref a), it seems Dizayee has knocked on the right door and persuaded the Turks that direct dialogue is better than continuing to spat through the media. Hopefully Dizayee will be able now to convince the Barzanis that initiating this process in a low-key manner rather than through a more formal meeting of delegations is better than not doing so at all.

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